



Wisconsin Ag News – Specialty Cheese

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Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Production Up 2 Percent

With 26 percent of the nation’s total cheese production, Wisconsin maintained its ranking as the nation’s top cheese producing state in 2019. At 818 million pounds, specialty cheese accounted for 24 percent of Wisconsin’s total cheese production. This was an increase of 15.5 million pounds over 2018.

Ninety-six of the State’s 127 cheese plants manufactured at least one type of specialty cheese during 2019. Blue, Feta, Havarti, Hispanic types, specialty Mozzarella, and Parmesan Wheel remain the most popular varieties. Production of specialty varieties of Monterey Jack rose 40 percent over the previous year, while Asiago production was up 14 percent.

Wisconsin cheese makers are known for offering a wide variety of high quality specialty cheeses. A specialty cheese is a value-added product which commands a premium price. According to the Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute, the nature of specialty cheese is derived from one or more unique qualities, such as exotic origin, particular processing or design, limited supply, unusual application or use, and extraordinary packaging or channel of sale. The common denominator is its very high quality.

Specialty Cheese Production – Wisconsin: 2018 and 2019

Type	2018 number of producers	2018 revised production (1,000 pounds)	2019 number of producers	2019 production (1,000 pounds)	Change in production from 2018 (percent)
Asiago.....	14	28,882	14	33,007	14
Cheddar ¹	45	28,681	44	30,216	5
Farmers.....	13	1,475	11	1,088	-26
Feta.....	9	102,505	10	101,035	-1
Gorgonzola.....	9	18,007	8	16,547	-8
Gouda.....	29	14,188	28	14,458	2
Italian Fontina.....	12	11,447	11	10,047	-12
Havarti.....	12	40,455	12	43,209	7
Hispanic.....	15	93,395	16	98,242	5
Limburger.....	1	464	1	365	-21
Monterey Jack ¹	15	9,392	16	13,126	40
Parmesan Wheel.....	6	70,948	6	74,656	5
Romano Wheel.....	8	9,516	6	9,773	3
All Other ²	54	373,378	51	372,507	0
Total ^{3,4}	99	802,732	96	818,276	2

¹ Includes only specialty types of this variety.

² Combined to avoid disclosure of individual plant data. Includes: Alpine, American Grana, Auribella, Bel Paese, Blue, Brie and Camembert, Butterkase, Edam, Fior di Latte, Fontinella, Gruyere, other specialty Italian, Italice, Juustoleipa, Kasser, Mascarpone, Middle Eastern cheeses, Morning Sun, specialty Mozzarella, other specialty Parmesan, Pepato, Peperon, specialty Provolone, other specialty Romano, Soft-ripened, specialty Swiss, Tvarog Polish, and Yogurt cheese.

³ Total cheese plants producing one or more specialty cheeses.

⁴ Data may not add to totals due to rounding.